

YOUTH AND VALUE CHAINS: AN OVERVIEW

This overview document is designed to help KHCP actors reflect on the following questions:

- Why might it be important to fully engage young people in KHCP activities?
- How might barriers to the accessibility and relevance of KHCP offerings to youth be identified and addressed?
- What might it take for KHCP partners to develop a youth-inclusive mindset, skillset and toolset?

WHO ARE YOUTH and WHAT CAN THEY OFFER KHCP?

- In Kenya, young people ages 15-30 represent over 30% of the population.
- They are a comparatively well-educated generation, many of whom have benefitted from universal primary education, along with improvements in childhood nutrition and healthcare.
- Most are economically active, contributing to the economic well-being of their households.
- Many blend livelihood activities with both continuing education pursuits and social capital formation (via youth groups, sports clubs, and self-help associations).
- Many have constrained access to both land and working capital, both of which are typically controlled by their parents and/or older relatives.
- This is a diverse cohort with pronounced differences in the experiences and opportunities between (i) young men and young women, (ii) rural and urban youth and, (iii) early school leavers and successful school graduates.



Photo by Fintrac Inc.

Youth farmers in Rift Valley show off their Mobydick flower crops. By ensuring that activities are relevant and accessible, USAID-KHCP helps to engage youth throughout the value chain.

HOW AGE (or DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE) RELATES TO VALUE CHAINS

Age (or developmental stage) related issues can influence value chain operations:

- **Who brings what to value chain opportunities** – Most young people bring limited physical assets (such as land, tools, or seed-stock) to value chain opportunities. They also tend to have more modest amounts of working capital. Youth are often focused on shorter term returns on investments. They are also often a highly mobile population.
- **Who is comfortable with new technologies and practices** – Young people are often more open to new technologies, as they tend to be comfortable with experimentation, hands-on learning, and positive risk-taking. This includes the use of information technologies, exploration of new niches in the value chain, and the integration of new farming practices.
- **Who is able to identify new opportunities** – While youth may have less overall social capital than their elders, they tend to have more diverse social networks, and are thus often-exposed to a wider range of new ideas, approaches, and value chain opportunities. They are also often more willing to experiment with new ways of working within a given sector.

WHY DO ACCESSIBILITY and RELEVANCE MATTER?

Young people's participation in KHCP programming is often constrained by barriers to relevance and accessibility:

- **Relevance** is linked to understanding young people's priorities regarding the content and instructional approaches used within capacity building offerings. It also focuses on ensuring that "opportunity cost" and "direct cost" constraints faced by young people and their households are reflected within intervention design.
- **Accessibility** might be defined as how programs or activities address common barriers to participation and completion – in particular, how the location, timing, pacing, seasonality, and duration of offerings might need to be adjusted to make them more accessible to specific segments of youth (such as young women or young parents), youth blending continuing education activities with livelihood pursuits, and youth with extensive household responsibilities.

WHAT MIGHT IT TAKE TO FULLY ENGAGE YOUTH in KHCP PROGRAMMING?

Successful youth-inclusive initiatives typically require a shift in a project's:

- **Mindset** – or the way that a project perceives the potential value-add to be generated via more fully incorporating youth into its programming
- **Skillset** – or the practical ability to reach, engage, fully involve, and successfully invest in young people's capacity to identify and seize value chain opportunities
- **Toolset** – or the standardized set of capacity building resources commonly available to project teams as they seek to design, deliver, evaluate and replicate youth inclusive programs and activities

HOW WILL KHCP KNOW WHEN ITS PROGRAMS ARE TRULY "YOUTH INCLUSIVE"?

A project's degree of "youth inclusiveness" can typically be seen as being somewhere along a continuum from "Youth Excluding" programs to those that are fully "Youth-Inclusive":

